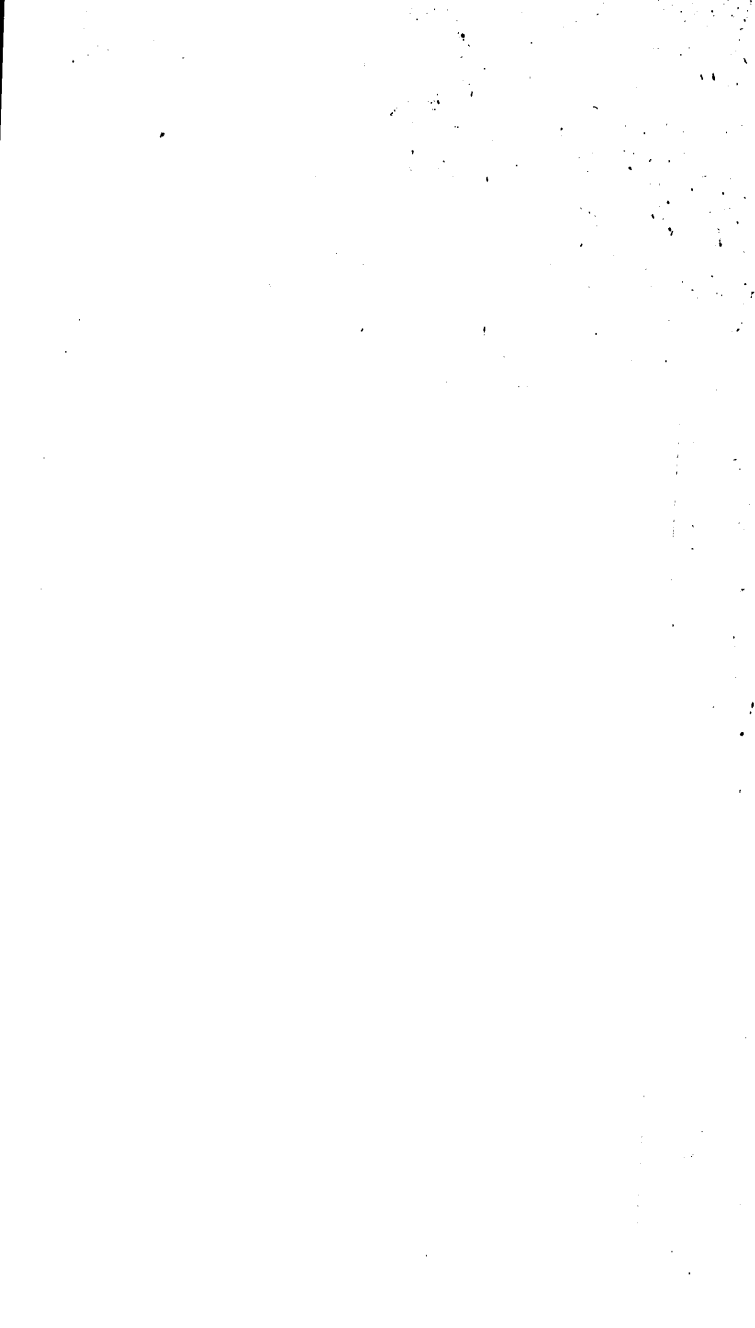


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Sheldon







ETHICS AND THE BELIEF IN A GOD.

ADDRESS

BY

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"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;
Hold you here root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are root and all,
I should know what God and man is."

—Tennyson.

"In Being's floods, in Action's storm,
I walk and work, above, beneath,
Work and weave in endless motion!

Birth and Death

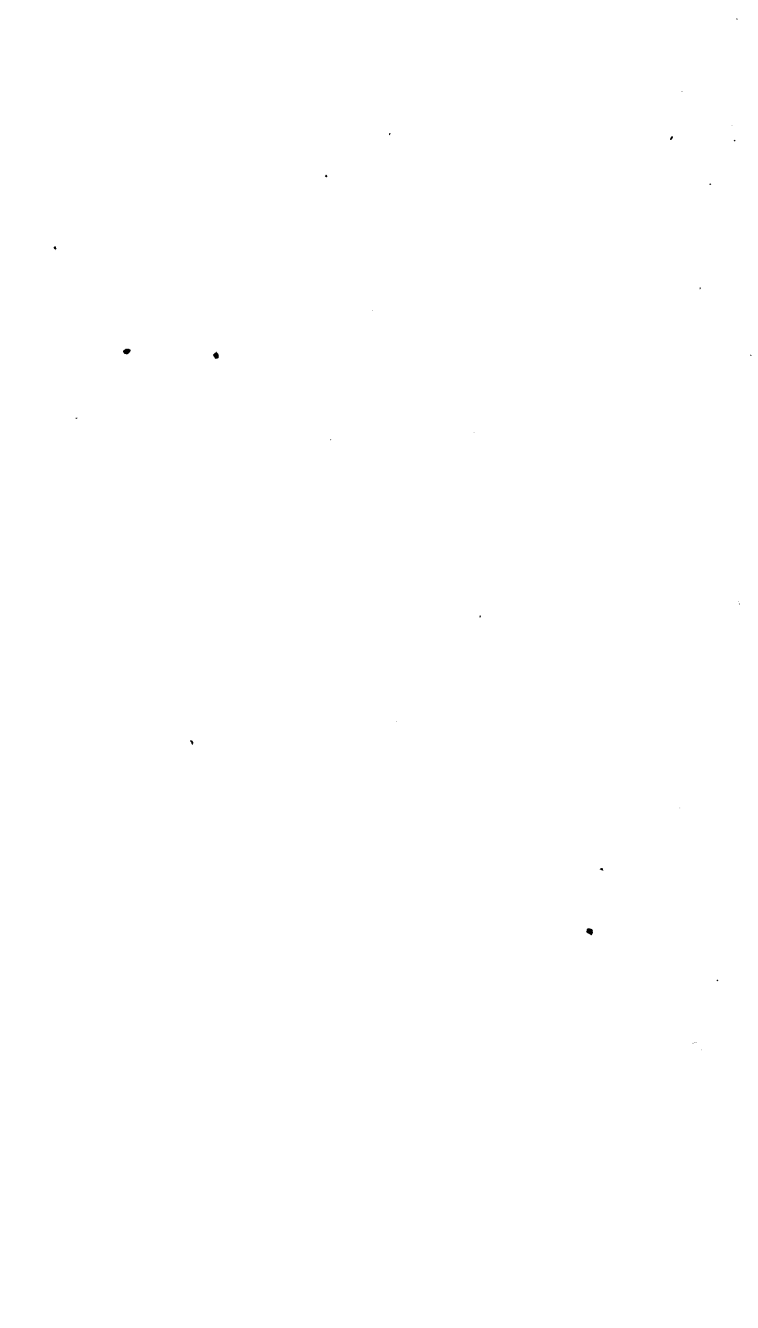
An infinite ocean;

A seizing and giving

The fire of living:

'Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by."

—Goethe.



Ethics and the Belief in a God.

We cannot all have the same God. I do not mean to say that there is more than one power at the heart of the Universe. The Deity which is, is one and the same. But the Deity we *believe in*, will depend on the stage of our culture. It is through the natural world that we have revealed to us the Supreme Being; but it is with our own minds that we interpret the natural world. We form our beliefs by what we think and feel. The developed or undeveloped condition of the mind and the heart in each one of us, will therefore determine for us our idea of God.

What we think of that Being, the conception we have of It, or of Him, the vision in our souls of the Ultimate Power, will depend for us on what we think of the stars and the planets; on the manner we picture in our fancy the life of the blade of grass, the muscular energy of the squirrel, or the laws of Human History. According as we understand Nature, just to that degree do we under-

stand and appreciate the Ultimate Source of Nature. We cannot have one idea of the Universe and its laws; it would not be possible for us to have one particular view as to the natures of earth, air, water and fire; we should not be authorized to have one special notion as to the meaning of force or energy; and at the same time have quite another and different idea of the power whence all this proceeds.

We cannot help having more or less vaguely or definitely, some picture or conception of the ultimate source of all reality. Our notions may be very confused; the outline may be so dim as to lead us to suppose that it does not exist in our minds at all. Possibly we assume that we are no longer thinking on the subject and are in a condition of what is called suspended judgment. But in spite of ourselves we do continue to shape the picture. Instinctively men say to themselves: *After all, there must be some kind of a Power.* At the same time it is quite true that the word "power" will have the most varied meaning. It may suggest to some of us the motion of the wind or the sound of a peal of thunder. Others will think of it as the Voice of Conscience. We shall be more likely to associate it, how-

ever, with the ordinary sense of muscular effort. That is our one personal experience of energy; and so it is natural to conceive of that peculiar sensation as being a picture of the Universal Energy.

But whatever goes on in our minds, it is from what we are conscious of, either in ourselves or in the natural world, that we must form our impressions or ideas of the Infinite Power. If there is a Center of Force, all that we look upon must proceed from it and constitute the basis of our knowledge of it. We are reminded of the assertion of St. Paul, made eighteen centuries ago: "The invisible things of God since the creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made." Emerson expressed the truth concisely when he said:

"Not unrelated, unaffiled,
But to each thought and thing allied,
Is perfect Nature's every part
Rooted in the Mighty Heart."

There must be some kind of a correspondence between what is within and what is without. It all forms part of one totality. We cannot separate Nature from its Central Energy, which we call God.

I venture to present this aspect once more, because it is clear to me that the new thought

of our day is tending to be one-sided in its utterances on theism. It is plain enough that some men have very crude, imperfect, if not debasing notions about the Deity. Nevertheless it would be simply impossible to develop the idea of the Universe and of the Supreme Being, in exactly the same shape for every mind. Each person will grasp it according to the delicacy of his feeling or his intellectual capacity. Law, order and morality, as ideas, will convey different notions to different men.

It would be useless for us to attempt to carry the sublime standpoint of Monotheism to the minds of the races living in the heart of Africa. That class of individuals must either have many Gods or else no God. They will need to pass to a higher stage of culture; that is to say, both the brain and the mind, as well as the emotions, must grow in breadth and capacity, before it would be possible for them to think or conceive by means of so sublime a Unity. I do not believe in seeking directly to change any man's special view of the Deity, although it may be perfectly clear that he is in the wrong. It strikes me that it would be far better to develop his mind and feelings to such a degree, that he would himself, of his own accord, outgrow his crude and mistaken concep-

tions. We can only elevate a man's views about God by enlarging his knowledge of Human History and his understanding of the Universe.

For the same reason it does seem to be a misfortune that so many persons have been disposed persistently to attack the belief in a Deity. Why not rather let it alone? Give the truths of nature; the true way of thinking about God will then come of itself. We cannot impart a plain idea to a confused thinker. If we wish to improve and develop a man's religious conceptions, would it not be better to begin lower down in the scale, and encourage him to use his mind more accurately in every kind of work? It would be inconceivable that men should be careless or slovenly in the manner of using their minds about the affairs of every-day life, and, on the other hand, be true and accurate in their religious opinions or their views of God.

It is a profound question just to what extent it is worth the while to endeavor to develop in all men the same idea as to the Supreme Power in the Universe. There is a class of minds at the present day who would like to draw the whole human race to one particular opinion or conception of that Being. But their efforts would be unavailing, even if we

were all free from the authority of tradition. Unless all men are on the same average of intellectual capacity, unless they are alike able to use the judgment all by itself quite separate from any play of the fancy, they could not all have the same thought, or even the same picture, of the great Energy which is at the center of all Reality. For one man it will be a supreme, majestic, spiritual Unity. To that person it will have almost no material coloring or form. But for another man it will be almost entirely human. He may see it in his mind, just as the painter has given it to us, as a great Fatherly Being appearing in the clouds of Heaven. There are the most diverse degrees of capacity for separating an idea from all sensuous coloring. If we undertake to make an Atheist of a man, we may only succeed in driving him to some other less noble thought about the Deity. If, on the other hand, we strive to awaken in him a conception too great and deep for his habit of mind, it may have the effect of urging him still nearer toward Atheism.

There is need of larger sympathy between men with reference to their views on religion. It will not do for us to think of ourselves in an attitude of superiority because of a con-

sciousness that we are a little nearer the truth. Are we to assume that our fellow men in other countries, or our forefathers in antiquity, have been groping in utter error and confusion? We must be a little cautious in the use of that word, *superstition*. It prevails to some extent in all of us. Superstition exists in the true sense only when a person's idea or thought of the Universe is inferior to what he is mentally capable of. But if what he believes, is in keeping with his stage of culture or the grasp of his intellect, he may be as true to his manhood as we aim to be ourselves. It must not be forgotten that this Supreme Being or Ultimate Source of the Universe, will be to all men for all time more or less of a picture. We shall all have some of the truth; none of us will have the whole truth.

It is now a hundred years since Diderot gave utterance to the well known saying, "Enlarge your God." We who are now further along by a century in the process of intellectual evolution, express that charge in a far deeper sense when we say rather: Enlarge your idea of Human History, enlarge your grasp of the facts of the Universe." If we do that, the processes of our own thinking of themselves will "enlarge our God."

If we could civilize the primitive races, if we could encourage mental capacity among savage people, if we could give them a more complete insight into the life of the world around them—we could then retire, and in the course of time those people would perhaps develop for themselves as true a religion, as true an idea of the Deity, as exists to-day in our own Christendom.

The God-Idea will always be a fascinating subject to the human consciousness, although we cannot all picture it alike. Men take pleasure in thinking of it and speculating upon it, even when they are assured in their own minds that there is no such a Supreme Being. What has interfered so much with all of our study of the subject, as every one knows, is that we are liable to have in mind the Deity of some particular creed or school of theology. Practically, it is only some special aspect of that kind toward which we ever take the attitude of a denial. When, however, we rise above doctrines or creeds, and deal with the one elemental fact or conception, we are then in the presence of an entirely different problem. It is not a question whether certain events took place as recorded to us in the writings of history. It is not

whether the opinions of one or another body of men are trustworthy. We are simply standing before the one problem as to what is the Ultimate Power in the Universe.

It is this fact which leads us to have such profound emotions in thinking about the idea of God. We are conscious that we are in search of the original source of all energy. Nature, the living organism, the history of our race, the human soul—these all are involved in the one thought. The sublime Unity whence this all proceeds, bids us pause and bow the head.

There is no humiliation in the attitude, no weak subservience to bare tradition, no abandonment of human judgment. It is simply the mind of man showing due respect to its greatest problem. Shall we acknowledge the sentiment of awe or astonishment before the little wonders or minor facts of nature as we see them, and not stand in awe before the last all-including wonder as to what is the meaning of the Universe?

II.

At the same time we shall not approach the subject all alike. It will depend on our personal interests and inclinations. We may be on a common plane of general culture and yet not have the same God.

When we look out at the sky or the clouds, when we survey the indications of new life appearing in the grass or the trees, for some of us it would only convey just so many indistinct but pleasing impressions of color and form. We may just like it and no more. It might be for us very much as the experience of another who sits idly dreaming as he listens to the sounds of music. He hears them vaguely. They play in and out of his consciousness, adding to the charm of his mood, recalling sweet memories, stimulating his fancy. And yet he may not, at the time, have it clearly before him that he is actually listening to music. We have all, at least to this extent, likewise been influenced by the colors and forms of the natural world. They play upon us and give every one at least some degree of happiness. The glow of the sunlight, the intense clearness of the sky, the depth of the blue, the green shades of the grass and leaves—this

all affects us and works upon our emotions. There is scarcely a man living who would not have something of this feeling of delight in the presence of the beauties of Nature.

But there will always be some who are not content simply to have the music play in and out of their consciousness. They would prefer to have some understanding of what they are listening to; they would be glad to have an intellectual sense of the meaning of the harmony. Just so it must be with others of us who look at the beauties of Nature. It is not enough for us to vaguely feel the charm of color and form.

As we go out of an afternoon or evening into the country, can we help now and then putting to ourselves the question: What does it all mean? Why is it that this beauty so affects me? What is the great law of this harmony? Who made it? Whence does it come? Why does it go on always the same? What is the reason for it? We would not be men at all if we did not have such reflections; we would be mere spiritual protoplasm.

But it is likewise true that every person in maturity, who puts that query under those circumstances, will always be conscious of a change in his reflections. The new thought

of our own day will not let us answer it exactly as men did of old. Nature is there just as before; it does not change; it is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. But the *way we think about it* is different. We have another conception of the Universe. I doubt whether there is a living person doing active thinking, who has not experienced the mood suggested to us in the time-worn lines of Wordsworth:

“It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
 Turn wheresoe’er I may,
 By night or day,
 The things which I have seen I now can see no
 more.
 The rainbow comes and goes,
 And lovely is the rose;
 The moon doth with delight
 Look round her when the heavens are bare;
 Waters on a starry night
 Are beautiful and fair;
 The sunshine is a glorious birth;
 But yet I know, where’er I go,
 That there hath passed away a glory from the
 earth.”

Probably all of us have felt this change in the emotions. We look up at the sky; it is the same blue vault. But where is the feeling we used to have in our earlier days? We think of the great events of history, which once would set us all aglow with enthusiasm for the past. But the solemn awe does not come back to heighten our reflections.

I do not propose to discuss the reasons for this change of mind. Philosophy will explain it in various ways. It is not to be regretted. It ought to be the experience of every growing or advancing soul. It is not a new circumstance in human history. Probably there have been minds who have undergone something of that kind of a tragedy, from the very first appearance of the race on earth. There must always be a shock in the transition for every life, when passing from the stage of feeling to the sovereignty of mind. It should give no cause for anxiety.

Whatever changes may take place in the present beliefs of men, it is nevertheless certain that those beliefs have left a permanent effect on human character and institutions. It is that permanent effect which is of chief consequence. The God-Idea, apart from all the errors with which it may have been associated, has served a great purpose in the history of the Race of Man. It has represented to human consciousness the *inwardness of things*. It has stood for the idea of internal order in the face of outside chaos. It has suggested a sense of something steady and abiding, underneath the endless series of changes on the surface. It has led men

to look for what is within. The eternal, the abiding, the unchangable, what is on the inside—that was God.

It was essential to the history and growth of our race that men should have come to appreciate the importance of what is within. Life has no meaning as long as we are on the mere surface. The God-Idea stood for what was underneath the surface. By the slow process of inferences and analogies, looking ever deeper and further for an inner life, searching for spirit through ever-widening circles, men came to discover the soul within themselves; to appreciate that their own true life was also not on the surface. The God-Idea served that one sublime purpose of suggesting to us that we look inward for the true life and the true self; that we care supremely for the life of the mind and the heart, for the pleasures of the soul, rather than for mere outward sensations or passing diversions.

The primitive minds were given, for example, to the worship of inanimate earth. They would reverence a stone. It was a power to them. They thought of it at first as living. But by and by they discovered that the stone never does anything of itself. It would lie motionless unless acted upon by some other

power. And the suggestion would come to them at last, that there was nothing inside. It was mere earth. There was no God in the stone.

But then comes the second thought. What of the moving water or the restless, invisible wind? Who could explain that mysterious power we term chemical energy? Is it strange that the undeveloped races should have worshipped the air and the ocean? Surely there is life and power in the wave or the wind. But then comes the second discovery. We have analyzed the elements of air and water. We know the process of their origin. We can take them apart and reproduce them. The wind and the water do not move or act by any power inside of themselves. They, too, are only mere earth. There is no God in the drop of water.

But then comes a further thought. What of the blade of grass growing by the wayside, or the tree looming up before our vision? No man has been able to construct organic life. Who would venture to call a plant or a tree an inanimate being? But, alas, on closer investigation, there, too, we discover no inward center of energy. They grow and develop; but they do not act for themselves with any

purpose. Each tree tends to reproduce the life of the one before it. It, too, is mere earth. There is no God in the blade of grass.

But then comes the fourth thought. What of the nervous organism? There we do appear to have discovered the center of energy. Does the bird not seem to act for itself? Is there not purpose in its flight? But again, the new thought steps in and tells us that there, too, is perhaps only a complex mechanism. The creature is only a bundle of wonderfully balanced habits. It, too, will tend simply to repeat the life of the parent. It, too, lacks self-creative energy. It is after all only mere earth. There is no God in the bird.

Finally comes the last thought, in the process of intellectual evolution. What of our own self? We discovered no inner power in the bird or the blade of grass, in the drop of water or the stone. Are we, too, mere earth? Is there no inner life in ourselves? But at this point the New Thought cannot affect our conviction. No man has been on the inside of a drop of water or a piece of stone; we have never penetrated to the heart of a sheaf of wheat or to the consciousness of the bird. We cannot assert of these other objects that

we have ever seen an inward energy there, a center to their being. We had thought it so. But it was only an inference. When, however, it comes to the human soul itself, we can all testify that each of us has actually beheld *one* inward life. Every man has been conscious of his own self. Philosophy or science cannot reason that fact away. It would be easier to make me believe the outside world an illusion than to convince me that my own soul did not exist. The life of my own mind is a fact. Whatever else may be questioned, this can never be questioned. I am something more than a mere mechanism. My soul can be seen by myself. It may be possible to explain my physical body as simply a most complex machine. But besides the machine there is *myself*. We can say with Whittier, speaking of God:

“The eye shall fail that searches
 For me the hollow sky;
 The far is even as the near,
 The low is as the high.
 O blind ones, outward groping,
 The idle quest forego;
 Who listens to his inward voice
 Alone of him shall know.”

And so it was as men went on searching for the inner life in the outer world, picturing

God in the stone, the wind, the sheaf of wheat, the motion of the stars, fancying they recognized spirit everywhere; they came at last to a realizing sense of a spirit within themselves, a higher inner life of mind and heart and character. Here at least was *one* trace of the Divine.

Slowly through that long process from the earliest times, the human mind has been searching after something inward, a center of energy. Whenever men thought they had found it, they called it God.

The God-Idea in the past in its higher form has always stood for this center of energy on the inside. It represented an *inward* to every *outward*. The supreme consideration is, that with the ever larger conception of the idea of Deity has increased in like degree the appreciation of the inner life in the human being. As his thought about the inwardness of Nature has deepened and developed, so has deepened and developed thought of his own inner soul. The value of that belief is that it has served to keep before human consciousness the fact that there was an inner life somewhere, until man should awaken to the truth that there was an inner higher life in his own being. Had he not conceived of a God in the

stone or the blade of grass, he would never have conceived of a soul within himself. He came by this process to discover that his true life was not in the activities of his physical organism, not in the play of the world or his senses, but rather in what went on within his mind and heart. He was not a mere body. He could no more have believed in a God if there had not existed such an inner center within his own nature, than he could have understood or appreciated such inner life in himself if he had not first conceived of the existence of a God.

III.

And thus at last we are brought to the culminating truth, that there may come a time in the process of human development when a belief in some particular idea of the Deity is no longer *essential* to the truest and best life of the soul. What was needed was, that man should find by some process what was the best thing in himself, what part of himself was most worth having. When he has discovered that measure of value, it is no longer necessary for him to have some [one] particular

theory or belief as to the great author of the Universe, called God.

Many of the best minds of our time are disposed to assume that the civilized human race is now reaching that necessary stage of culture. I will not for that reason argue the question. We appeal rather to the students of history. But if this be true, it entirely alters the whole aspect of the question. It no longer is of consequence that we cannot all have the same God. We do not need to discuss questions of theology. It is not essential that we should endeavor to prove or disprove the fact of the existence of such a Supreme Being. Each man is left to think and choose for himself according to his own mind and character.

When we have once set the God-Idea free from serving a mere purpose of utility in the human soul, when we cease to ask of it that it shall act as a kind of police force in society, then the soul of man can give to itself wings. The Supreme Power then appeals to another side of our nature. It ceases to be the motive power of action. We know that this inner life is the best. We appreciate the fact that whatever helps and elevates that soul-life is to be sought after; whatever weakens it or destroys it, is to be shunned. After that dis-

covery has been made, we find the motive for right-living in ourselves. Ethics, as such, requires no God.

IV.

But the God-Idea has not for that reason necessarily been taken away. It has rather been set free, in order to assume a loftier character. We shall no longer feel that we must try and think about it in a certain way in order to make it useful. We are at liberty to throw up the window and let the light of the universe shine in upon us as it may. We stand ready to receive what comes. We will be in no dread of any possible consequences. If we think we can see behind the veil, it is well. If the veil is drawn close, and after all our search we still are led to assume that we can see nothing—nevertheless, it is well.

Within the last few centuries there has come to be a class of minds almost, if not quite, unknown in antiquity. They are called "Lovers of Nature." It might indeed be said that the human race has discovered another vast, intrinsic source of pleasure. Joy of this kind in its pure and complete form is

a late appearance in history. The consciousness of antiquity did, of course, take a certain delight in the beauties of the Natural World. Men have always loved to roam through the fields, wander in the woods, or look out upon the sea. But I do not remember a single instance in early history where those circumstances gave birth to great poetry. It is almost like a new sense given to the soul of man. The Greeks, or Romans, or the Egyptians would have had little appreciation of much of the poetry of Wordsworth or of Goethe.

There is something so entrancing in the beauties of Nature, that we cannot help loving them in spite of every intellectual discovery. Whatever is behind it all, for a time the soul just accepts the pleasure of the emotion, and says, "I like it." The clouds of April always make the soul sing. It would be well for us if once every year we read over again Shelley's beautiful poem "To a Skylark," and the one to the "Cloud." They are the most beautiful Hymns to Nature ever written. Whatever new thought may come to us, whatever may be the outcome of philosophy, the spirit of that music will be true and everlasting. The clouds and the sky *are* beautiful; the rainbow as a rainbow is not changed; the

sunset is always the sunset; no philosophy, no science can alter the the fact of *beauty in nature*. We may have other notions as to the idea of order or of law; we may not have the same conception of energy or power. But there continues for us, all the same, the eternal element of beauty. We say over to ourselves the lines of Shelley:

“ In the golden lightening
Of the sunken sun
O’er which the clouds are brightening
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.”

What philosophy can ever touch those emotions? What new science will change for us the “golden lightening of the sunken sun?” We repeat to ourselves what he sang “To the Skylark:”

“The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight
Like a star of heaven
In the broad daylight;
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.”

What possible materialism, atheism, or any other ism could change for us the “pale purple even?” Who can alter the fact of the “unseen star of heaven existing in the broad daylight?” Will not the thought of that hidden beauty always thrill the soul in spite of

philosophy? It may be possible to reduce everything to law; but it will not be possible to destroy the *fact* of color and form. If we like them—if they set the soul athrill—the emotion is then beyond the reach of science or philosophy.

Whatever change may come to us in our thoughts about the Great Designer; whatever diversities of opinion we may hold now as to the existence of a Providence over the Race of Man; in spite of all changes that may come to our intellectual conviction—the joy in beauty survives. Nature as it is before our eyes, will continue just as before. The God we see is at least unchanged, however different we may find the Power behind it all actually to be, through further thinking or research. We are so given in our time to being philosophical, we are so much inclined to be groping behind the veil in order to uncover the final mystery, that we do not appreciate all that is before us ever unveiled. This is what is sung by the poet and so little observed by the philosopher. There comes to us the words of the early teacher and ancient prophet of the Hebrews: “Canst thou by searching find out God?” The philosopher and the prophet of to-day may be putting the same question.

But the poets of all ages have found the "beautiful even" and the "golden sunset," even if they have sometimes failed to discover God.

Amid all that distracts and jars upon us in human life, in the face of injustice and the wrong constantly before our attention, in view of the consciousness of human struggle, amid the pain and distress and trial, with a sense of all the brutal and callous feelings of man—even thinking of this, while it gives sorrow, does not alter the fact of this wide, outspread beauty in Nature. Out in that other world there is always the "cloud with a silver lining."

For the eye that looks, and the soul that feels, there can at every moment of the day be something of charm to dwell upon. We may have to search for it occasionally, and go out of our regular pathway to find it. But it is always there. No person need be without the joy that comes from changing color. Every soul can have the experience of sweet memories that rise through pictures. No mind need be quite so dull as not at least to be able to draw pleasure from the glory of Nature.

V

But there is something more than simple beauty, in Nature. It is not necessary that we should stop with the pleasure in mere color and form. Who has not been conscious of a deep sentiment of reverence in the presence of Niagara? But it is not the great rush of sound, that awakens the feeling. It would be possible to bring about a far greater volume of tone by artificial means. It is not the terrific noise that moves us so solemnly when hearing a peal of thunder. What does call forth the emotion is just the grandeur of concentrated power. We are vaguely conscious of the tremendous degree of energy being expended there before our eyes. It is the solemn thunder of that Ultimate Energy, which awakens the emotions. No man will look on the ocean without a sense of awe, as its waters beat restlessly and unceasingly against the shore. But the awe that stirs him does not come from the bare color of the sunlight or the moonlight playing across the waves; it is not the sweet sound of the splash of the breaking billows

showing their multitude of rainbows as they rise and fall. No; it is the same thought of the energy gathered or centered in those waves. We seem to be conscious of the whole mass of the great ocean moving at every instant, with the rise and fall of each tiny ripple. What stirs the feeling at such a moment is nothing more than a consciousness of that Universal Energy, with which the most profound minds now associate the idea of God.

Who would be ashamed of the sense of sublimity that comes over us when looking at the vault of the blue sky! It is not the mere distance of the spectacle, or the coloring, which charms a man. It is not the endless space which calls out the emotion. What appeals to us at such a moment is the sense of unity or totality in all things, which is conveyed to us by looking on that infinite vault of Heaven.

We should not care to lose that sentiment of awe which steals over us in thinking of the heroic acts of men, of the splendid deeds of self-denial, the earnest devotion to an Ideal Cause. What mind can help that sense of reverence for patient suffering or heroic silence? And yet the consciousness within us of awe and reverence for those acts, does not altogether come because we attribute it

all to those special persons. It is rather the fact before us in our thought that they were our brothers, that it was our human race itself which was capable of that Ideal Excellence. It may even suggest the other thought of the unity of this same race as a part of one wide, infinite Universe. It is at the consciousness of such a Unity that we again bow the head.

We can see now the value of the God-Idea and the purpose it has served through its sublime suggestiveness.

It has helped to keep alive the truth that behind the beauty, color and form, motion and rest, height and depth, the distance and the nearness—that behind all this there is always something else; as we have said, an inward to every outward, a “soul to things natural.” This is the one universal element contained in all ideas about Nature’s God. Even if we should discard the old traditions about the great Designer; even if we should not conceive of that power at the center of the Universe as a personal Being; nevertheless, every possible analogy suggests to us that there is something else besides what we see, touch and feel. We cannot escape from a certain sense of awe in the presence of that fact or conviction. Phil-

osophy and science both admit, that when they have analyzed the constituents of the crystal, they have not been able to explain how it came to be. We know the law by which the spheres or planets swing in their courses; nevertheless there is not a single human mind as yet who has been able to say how it is done, to give any sort of a picture of the law of gravitation. Every particle of matter moves towards every other particle. That is the principle. What makes it do it, how each particle can draw the other particle, no thought has yet made clear. We are still on the outside of Nature. What the inner power is, we cannot fully explain. We are simply impressed with the fact that there is something more beyond. The name Unknowable is not correct. Agnosticism does not express it. We do understand something of it, because we are in contact with a part of it. Nature must be a portion of its own God.

It is this deeper thought of the "something more beyond" which so elevates the feelings of the true lover of Nature. This other fact is what inspired the poetic genius of Shelley and Goethe, of Wordsworth and Emerson.

This is not the God of tradition or super-

stition. It cannot be considered quite either the Deity of the Greek, Roman or Hebrew. To a certain degree we might call it the poet's God. He is the genius that makes the one great leap by analogy, and claims the privilege of believing that because there is a soul in him, there must be a soul of some kind in all Nature.

The grander utterances of those great poets come when they let go the traditional feeling and speak right out of their direct personal emotions. We are acquainted with the mood of Wordsworth—so loved, too, by Emerson :

"I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

There speaks the true lover of Nature. There pours forth the heart of the lover and worshipper of Nature's God. There is no superstition about it, no mere fancy; it is the conviction of a sublime analogy. He, too,

feels the elements of beauty. The color and the form delight him as they would any other man. The ocean, the sky and the living air have for him their direct charm as well. But that is only one feature of their beauty. We can almost say, the mind has its sphere of joy as the heart its sphere of pleasure. What elevates the soul to a loftier height, what lifts the feeling for the beautiful into the grandeur of thought, what gives joy to the mind, is rather "the sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused." No man need believe it if he does not wish to do so. This is the gift of the poet to the religious world. He makes us true lovers of Nature.

I always hesitate and tremble a little when referring to this great thought of the poets and religious teachers, who have been lovers of Nature. It can be so easily misconstrued or misapplied. It may give the mind fancies rather than sublime emotions. Nevertheless the fact is there. In a true and large sense—at least in our private reflections—we are justified in thinking of "Nature and Nature's God."

We need to revise our thoughts and conceptions somewhat, in order to be able to enjoy the poetry as well as the philosophy of

Nature. We are in danger of not getting all the value from some of the rare treasures of human thinking and emotion, because we are afraid lest we be too much influenced by tradition or superstition. When the poet or philosopher speaks to the universal heart of man, we want what he has to say; it does not matter what particular garb of tradition he may clothe it in. I am almost inclined to think that the poetry of Nature has been the greatest gift of art to the modern world. I value it more than the paintings of Raphael, or the sculpture of Michael Angelo. There was sculpture and painting in antiquity; but a new sphere of art or emotion has been unfolded. We are able to appreciate what the eye sees in the sunset or in the play of light on the grass. A new sphere of joy has come to us, another kind of music for the soul.

Thought replaces what has been lost in the sphere of mere feeling. Intellectual beauty offers another aspect of Nature. The emotions re-kindle as the eye of the mind looks deeper. That is what I understand by the closing lines of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," from the poet Shelley:

"The day becomes more solemn and serene
 When noon is past—there is a harmony
 In autumn and a lustre in its sky,
 Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
 As if it could not be, as if it had not been;
 Thus let thy power which like the truth
 Of nature on my passive youth
 Descended, to my onward Life supply
 Its calm—to one who worships thee,
 Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
 To fear himself, and love all humankind."

Poetry at this point blends with Philosophy.
 We think of the great trio—Goethe, Emerson
 and Spinoza.

VI.

The God-Idea will always assume a different aspect for each epoch in history. The tendency of our own time in reference to this sublime problem must of necessity be different from what it was in antiquity. Human interest turns now in a different direction.

Who, for example, could forget the emotion he has experienced when walking up and down the aisles of some old cathedral; yet no two persons would have quite the same feelings under those circumstances. We may be charmed with the beauty. The music of the

choir may reach us as the tones float outward and upward, losing themselves in the vault overhead. But there are two quite different attitudes of mind that could come to us at such a moment. We might say to ourselves: "What a wonderful person he must have been who could conceive the design of this building! What power of thought he must have had! How interesting it would have been if we only could have known him! It would have given us such pleasure to have talked with so mighty a genius. Who, indeed, was the composer of that wonderful music? How grand must have been his personality! What charm it would have given us if we could have met that great musician!"

And so it would be, that all our thought at such a time would concentrate itself on the man or person who *did the work*. Our interest in the mighty structure itself, our pleasure in the glorious music, would have been second to our interest in the mind itself where was born such sublime conceptions.

Just in the same way it could happen that a practical mind might stand looking at some wonderful example of engineering skill. He may think to himself: "What a great inventive genius it must have required to have

conceived this design! What grandeur there must have been in his character! What must have been the splendor of his thought! How wonderful and inspiring must have been his personality! What a pleasure it would have been to have known the man who could do so great a work!"

But, on the other hand, there might be another class of persons. We perhaps could reflect to ourselves as visitors in that cathedral: "What marvelous unity prevails in this structure! How perfect are the proportions! What beauty there is in the shape of the columns! How marvelously adapted are the various parts! What grace there is in the stonework of the windows! How majestically the vault rises overhead! What sweetness and power there is in such wonderful music! How it stirs me to better things! What memories come back to me! What aspirations are kindled in the soul! How the tender chords of finer feeling begin to awaken! Oh, that wonderful, wonderful music!"

We could be so absorbed in the mere consciousness of the unity and beauty of it all, in the sentiment it kindles in ourselves, that we might scarcely think of the minds whose power or genius conceived it for us.

Just so it could be with the practical individual in the presence of that marvelous instance of engineering. He, too, might perhaps say to himself: "What perfection exists in each little detail of this great work! How delicately every part has been finished! What unity prevails in every portion! How inspiring it is to stand thus looking at a sample of truly perfect workmanship!"

It strikes me that this represents the contrast between the two ages of history and their attitudes toward the idea of God. It is not so much the belief which has changed. But *human interest* is now different. Antiquity stood before Nature or the Universe, and the tendency of mind at that time was to think, not on the world itself, but rather on the power that conceived and made it. They sang one endless hymn of praise to the Infinite Personality. Their enthusiasm could be expressed in their one exclamation: "How wonderful art Thou, O God!" But in our day we think of the marvelous qualities and laws, rather than of the Power whence they came as their Author. We say to ourselves: "How wonderful is this Universe! What delicacy there is in its structure! How sublime is its unity! What ma-

jesty there is in its changeless law! How perfect are its proportions! How strictly it moves and holds the planets in their spheres! How faithfully it executes justice over the races of men! What trust it inspires! How it stirs my soul with its beauty! What a splendor of emotion rises within me as I think of myself as a part of this colossal Unity!"

This conveys the contrast in the two attitudes. It is simply a difference of stress, rather than a marked contrast of belief. The antique world cared supremely about the person who made it; just as the minds of to-day think rather on the way it was made.

The sublime order inspires our trust and our awe. We say to ourselves: "Whether or not a personality exists; whence all this comes, —the *law* is there and never changes; I can behold that with mine own eyes." To-day men think of the Law; in earlier times they thought rather of the Law-Giver.

Possibly in the future the time may come when these two attitudes of mind will reach an adjustment. It is probably true that some men will always pursue the one further grand analogy. They will persist in thinking that, if there is an inner self in the human being, a center of energy which I behold in my own con-

sciousness, then it must follow that there is some kind of an inward life and center of energy in the Universe. But through all ages there will survive a diversity of opinion. Men will represent the various stages of culture. Disposition of mind will show every contrast. It will always be the same story to the end of time. We cannot all have the same God.

There will surely be the one class of persons who have little care for the subject at all. Their enthusiasm will reserve itself for the human life. They will have no particular interest in Nature, the outside world, or the cause of Nature. It is not fair to blame or think ill of such persons. They may be true in their sphere and to their mission. They, too, should not think lightly or contemptuously of others who are not satisfied unless they can go further. But if there are no chords in our souls so arranged as to respond to the beauties of Nature or to its infinite harmony, we may be able to concentrate ourselves all the more devotedly and loyally to the life of human society.

There will be others who will think very much upon the Universe and upon God. Their disposition will lead them in that direction. But the attitudes of mind will still be

most different. One person will approach that throne of Power, and think of it as a personal human father kissing his child's eyelids in the dark, as in the exquisite poem, "A Child's Thought of God," by Mrs. Browning. Another mind will approach that Being as if it were more majestic, like a great invisible father, still somewhat human, but noble and grand. Such was the attitude of the poet Cowper. That, too, was the sentiment of Schiller, who made it as the refrain to his "Hymn to Joy:"

" Brothers, above the starry heavens
Must a loving Father dwell."

Then also there will be a class of persons who approach the subject with a reverent awe lest they make the idea too small—lest they injure its grandeur by thinking of it too definitely. They will say, with Goethe:

" Who dare name Him?
Who confess,
I believe Him?
Who profess, I believe Him not? "

This is not Atheism. It is the attitude of that class of men who let their attention go out rather to the *fact*, to the law in Nature, seeking the divine element in their own feelings and striving to be true to their best as-

pirations, while they wait patiently for further enlightenment.

All these attitudes are possible. We might say that they are all rational. For they depend on the character and mind of each person. The Divine has come to stand for what is at the center, and as such, therefore, what is to regulate the whole being, whether in ourselves or in the universe. In that sense we can all use the word indiscriminately. It should not be for the exclusive use of any particular creed. It would have the same significance even if there were no God. There is always a divine element in ourselves, for there is always in ourselves a central self which gives the law of Duty. The human soul on this great subject of theism must choose for itself. This solemn privilege is the one great truth which evolves from the study of Ethics and the Belief in a God.

For the literature of the subject of Theism, with the various attitudes, see Martineau's "Study of Religion;" Mathew Arnold's "God and the Bible," and his "Literature and Dogma;" Flint's "Theism" and "Anti-Theistic Theories;" Feuerbach's "Essence of Christianity;" John Stuart Mill's "Three Essays on Religion;" Janet's "Final Causes;" "Candid Examination of Theism," by Physicus; Spencer-Harrison Controversy on "Religion;" Schleiermacher's "Monologues;" Fisher's "Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief;" Clifford on "Cosmic Emotion," in his "Lectures and Essays;" Abbott's "Theism;" Lange's "History of Materialism;" Renan's "Philosophical Dialogues." For the attitude of Ethics to the Belief in a God, see the works on Ethics in England by Sidgwick, Spencer, Bain, and the late Thomas Hill Green; in Germany and Austria, by Paulsen, Gizycki, Steinthal, Höffding, and Wundt.



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